

## BOARD OF NURSING CENTENNIAL

The Act creating the Minnesota State Board of Examiners of Nurses became law on April 12, 1907. To celebrate 100 years of growth and progress in nursing regulation, the Minnesota Board of Nursing (name was changed in 1955) is planning several events and has assembled a brief history of the Board, along with biographies of influential members. The history is a series of ten with one decade to be posted monthly for the remainder of this centennial year. (Please see below for links to each decade). Similarly, the leadership biographies will be expanded throughout the year. We hope you enjoy reading this shared history and encourage you to submit any corrections or historical, anecdotal, or biographical information you may have.

### **BEFORE THE MINNESOTA STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS OF NURSES ACT: IMPORTANT EARLY ACTIONS**

Several significant developments in the regulation of health care practices predate establishment of the Minnesota State Board of Examiners of Nurses and are noteworthy in this history.

- The Minnesota State Board of Health was established in 1872.
- Legislation created the Board of Medical Practice in 1883.
- Also in 1883, the year it was founded, the Northwestern School of Nursing had a graduating class of one. Officials of the school worried whether its graduates “could be assured a sufficient number of families who would be willing to pay \$12 a week for nursing services” and “if the school should graduate four nurses in a single year, would not the supply exceed the demand?”
- The Minnesota Board of Dentistry was established in 1885.
- In 1898 nurses in St. Paul created the first professional registry in the United States. From the minutes of the St. Paul Medical Journal: “The Ramsey County Graduate Nurses Association, a nurses’ directory, was established with headquarters at the Ramsey County Medical Society on August 8, 1898. The control and government of the directory is entirely in the hands of the nurses themselves. They have decided to admit none but graduates of training schools to membership. Previous to this they had nowhere to register except in drug stores. As the committee on membership makes a thorough investigation and admits none but graduates in good standing any one procuring a nurse from the directory can rely upon it, that she will prove efficient and capable. A physician desiring a trained nurse can get one by telephoning to the clerk in charge.”
- North Carolina enacted the first U.S. nursing board in 1903.
- In 1905 the Minnesota Nurses Association began work to create a licensing board in Minnesota.

**1907-1917**

## 1907 – 1917

The 1907 bill creating the Minnesota State Board of Examiners of Nurses was introduced in the Senate by Dr. H.H. Witherstine and in the House by Dr. J.A. Gates. The bill met with “much less opposition than anticipated.” There is no explanation of just what opposition was expected or from whom. The nurses association had incurred costs of \$800 in their work to support passage of the bill. One-hundred-eighty-three members paid a special assessment of \$2 to help meet this expense.

Governor John A. Johnson signed the legislation, making it effective on April 12, 1907.

“It shall be unlawful for any person to practice professional nursing in this state unless such person shall have first obtained a certificate of registration as provided in this Act.” The preceding is Section 1 of the Act, which also specifies that persons who receive certificates from the Board will be known as “RN” and that no others may use this title.

The original board had five members, four nurses and one medical doctor, appointed by the Governor. The four nurses had to be actively practicing for five years after graduating from a reputable training school whose course of training was not less than three years of hospital service. Two of the nurses had to have had at least two years’ experience teaching nursing. The first board members were Edith Pauline Rommel, president, Eleanor Hamilton, Bertha Johnson, Helen M. Wadsworth and Dr. Jeannette MacLaren.

The original board members were required to “give a bond in the sum of \$1,000, with securities to be approved by the Secretary of State, conditioned for the faithful performance of his or her duties, and shall take the oath provided by law for public officers.”

The requirements for a nursing license were

1. age 21 or over
2. of good moral character
3. education equivalent to that required for admission into high school (eighth grade)
4. graduation from a training school connected with a general hospital where three years of training with a systematic course of instruction is given in the hospital, or graduation from a training school in connection with a hospital of good standing supplying three years training corresponding to the above standards, which training may be obtained in two or more hospitals
5. apply to the board and pay a \$5 fee

Edith Pauline Rommel, who served as board president until 1914, was the first nurse licensed in Minnesota in 1908. She was a 1900 graduate of Northwestern Hospital School of Nursing in Minneapolis, which was the first school of nursing in Minnesota.

By the end of 1908, 102 RN licenses had been granted. These included nurses with graduation dates as early as 1894.

The Minnesota State Board of Examiners of Nurses published the first statement of standards and curriculum in 1910. Beginning then, nursing schools were granted accreditation by the board. Requirements were that the school's nursing program had to be at least three years with a minimum of 184 hours of instruction. Helen M. Wadsworth was the first board member delegated to make inspections of schools.

The first approved schools were:

- Asbury Hospital School of Nursing, Minneapolis
- Bethesda Hospital School of Nursing, St. Paul
- City and County Hospital School of Nursing, St. Paul
- Minneapolis General Hospital School of Nursing, Minneapolis
- Northwestern Hospital School of Nursing, Minneapolis
- St. Barnabas Hospital School of Nursing, Minneapolis
- St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing, St. Paul
- St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing, Minneapolis
- Swedish Hospital School of Nursing, Minneapolis
- University School of Nursing, Minneapolis

By 1917 the revised Requirements and Curriculum for Schools of Nursing in Minnesota were a three year course of study, with 168 hours in the first year, 128 hours in the second year and 108 in the third for total of 408 hours and a probation period of 2-3 months with two classes daily (theory and demonstration) and 4-6 hours daily duty

In the 1917 revision, the requirements for admission to training schools were as follows: "The following graduation of educational requirements is recommended: From January 1918 to January 1920, evidence of a successful completion of one year of high school work. From January 1920 until January 1922, evidence of a successful completion of two years of high school work. After January 1922 evidence of four years of high school work.

"Candidates for admission to Training Schools for nurses should present the following evidence: home training and influences fitted to form good moral character and lay the foundation for the future work of the nurse. Good physical condition. A complete physical examination should be made by a physician before application is accepted. Physical and mental development shall be taken into consideration in connection with the age of the candidate, but in general, it is advised that a pupil shall not be under twenty (20) years or over thirty-five (35) years of age."

Minnesota had 1900 RN licensees at the end of 1917.